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SUBJECT: DELHI DIARY, DEC 17-21

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¶1. (U) Below is a compilation of political highlights from Embassy New Delhi for Decemebr 17-21, 2007, that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

- Court Orders Reopening Riots Case Against Congress Leader Jagdish Tytler
- Rajasthan Gujjars Threaten Warpath Again
- India-China First Ever Joint Army Exercise
- New Chinese Ambassador to India
- A Bounce in India-Vietnam Security Relations
- Indian Arms Supplies to Nepal?
- India-Burma Close To Concluding Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project Deal
- Indian Foreign Secretary in Beijing for 3rd Round of Strategic Dialogue
- China Bashing by George Fernandes
- Not So Fast Stalin!

Court Orders Reopening Riots Case Against Congress Leader

¶1. (U) Justice may yet be served in the case of former Congress Minister Jagdish Tytler's orchestrating role in Delhi's 1984 anti-Sikh riots. A Delhi court has ordered India's Criminal Bureau of Investigations (CBI) to reopen the case against Tytler to take into account statements from a key witness. Jasbir Singh, now settled in the U.S., claimed to have overheard and seen Tytler inciting and leading murderous mobs in North Delhi during the riots. The Nanavati Commission's original investigation into Tytler's role during the riots found "credible evidence" that he played a role in organizing the communal attacks, but the CBI controversially recommended closure of the case in September for lack of evidence and because Jasbir Singh supposedly could not be traced. Singh filed his affidavit in 2000 but subsequently moved to the U.S. where Indian authorities insisted they had been unable to reach him until he recently resurfaced through media outlets following the closure of the case.

12. (C) Comment: Tytler's day in court is long overdue. In the days after Indira Gandhi's assassination, he was among the local Congress Party leaders competing with one another to see which wards would shed more Sikh blood. In exhorting his party cadres and goons to kill more Sikhs, he is reported to have told them they shamed him in the eyes of the top Congress leaders because there were fewer killings in his wards. The killing by his henchmen apparently ensured his success in establishing Congress Party bona fides and demonstrating fealty to the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty because he has regularly been given the Congress Party ticket in parliamentary elections since then and has served as a federal Minister in Congress-led governments. The role of Tytler and other Congress leaders continues to be a millstone for the Congress Party and the secular credentials it professes to espouse. Many commentators view the Congress Party's involvement in inciting and murdering innocent civilians in 1984 as far worse than the purported role of Gujarat Chief Minister Modi in condoning the 2002 Gujarat riots. While these recent court developments do not imply that we will see Tytler's conviction -- none of the mob leaders have been convicted in the 23 years since the riots -- they are a step towards justice for the families victim to Tytler's murderous actions in 1984. The court's order shows how the CBI has become a pliant pawn of political masters but also demonstrates the fierce independence of the Indian judiciary. Note: Despite his notoriety, we learned recently that Tytler has a valid B1/B2 visa. End Note.

Rajasthan Gujjars Threaten Warpath Again

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13. (U) Gujjars, a farming community in northern India, have threatened to re-launch their agitation in Rajasthan to demand Schedule Tribe (ST) status, which brings with it political and economic benefits under India's elaborate system of incentives and goodies to uplift the weaker sections of society. The Gujar threat follows a finding by a specially constituted committee that the inclusion of Gujjars in the ST list is not justified. Gujjars in the state had taken to the streets in May 2007 with this demand. The agitation, which spilled into neighboring states, had turned violent with at least 26 deaths. The protests had been called off after talks between the community's leadership and the Rajasthan government resulted in the establishment of a committee headed by Justice Copra to look into the Gujjars' demands. Once an economically and politically powerful community, Gujjars in Rajasthan have steadily lost their clout after the Meenas, other major community of the state, were given ST status in the early 1980s.

14. (U) The Chopra committee indicated that the designation of Gujjars as a ST could not be justified under the existing criteria used in India. The committee instead recommended the development of a special economic and social package for Gujjars. The Rajasthan cabinet tried to duck the issue by forwarding the committee's report to the federal government on December 18 without any recommendation. The Gujjars want the state government to take their side with a recommendation for ST status. Considering the scale of the violence in May, it is conceivable that the Gujjars will once again begin protests that turn destructive. As in the past, the Rajasthan Gujjars will find support in the community in the neighboring Haryana and Uttar Pradesh states, which could lead to large scale disruption of road and rail traffic into and around Delhi.

India-China First Ever Joint Army Exercise 21-25 December

¶5. (SBU) Integrated Defense Staff officers confirmed that the delayed inaugural India-China joint army exercise initially announced in May 2006 will take place in the mountainous regions outside of Kunming on December 21-25. Eighty soldiers from each side are expected to participate in the counterterrorism exercise involving mock battles with one group of soldiers acting as terrorists attacking sensitive locations. Both sides are downplaying the scope of the exercise, with an IDS Army General describing it as a simple infantry training exercise, and Chinese sources calling it training and not an exercise. Despite the small scale of the exercise, the political significance is not lost, and it is expected to be a confidence-building measure that could be the springboard to greater army-to-army interaction in the future. Media reports quote a senior Indian Ministry of Defense official as stating that, "The purpose is to feel each other (out) and see if we can work together in the future."

New Chinese Ambassador to India

¶6. (SBU) Former Director General at the Department of Disarmament and Arms Control Zhang Yan presented his credentials to Indian President Pratibha Patil on December 18. Previously, Zhang was China's Permanent Representative and Ambassador to the UN in Vienna, as well as Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The appointment is interesting given China's reservations about the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal and India's aspirations to become a permanent member of an

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expanded UNSC and Zhang's undoubted expertise on those issues.

A bounce in India-Vietnam Security Relations

¶7. (SBU) Indian Defense Minister A.K. Antony declared "a new chapter in defense cooperation" between India and Vietnam during his December 16-18 visit to Hanoi. To add momentum to the strategic partnership announced by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during Vietnamese President Nguyen Minh Triet's July visit to Delhi, Antony said that 5,000 naval spare items belonging to the Indian Navy's Petya class of ships will be transferred to Vietnam to make many of Vietnam's aging vessels operational. In addition, Antony and his Vietnamese counterpart General Phung Quang Thanh agreed to establish a joint working group to facilitate the signing of an MOU on defense cooperation. Citing traditionally close and cordial relations since the era of Nehru and Ho Chi Minh, the two sides also decided to increase the number of military exchanges with the Indian military expanding its English, defense and information technology training of Vietnamese forces. We note the English training could be particularly helpful as we look to collaborate more with India on peacekeeper training within the region.

Indian Arms Supplies to Nepal ?

¶8. (C) The Indian media reports that India may resume arms supplies to Nepal after a three-year hiatus. The Tribune News Service asserts that increased Chinese involvement in Nepal and a new dynamic between the Maoists and the army, previously allied with King Gyanendra, has led the GOI to mull a resumption of arms supplies to the Nepalese Army. MEA Nepal desk contacts stated that no official request has been made by the Government of Nepal, therefore they would not comment on the media reports. General (retd.) Ashok Mehta, a good Embassy contact with significant access in military circles and Kathmandu, told Poloff he does not believe a

request from Nepal would be approved at this time due to "political sensitivities." He added the GOI does not want to disturb the status quo with its relations with Kathmandu at this time.

India-Burma Close To Concluding Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project Deal

¶9. (C) "The Indian Express" reported on December 14 that the GOI intends to ink the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project with Burma when Burmese Foreign Minister U Nyan Win visits Delhi on January 1st. The Kaladan Project will be a major transport corridor linking India's land-locked northeastern states with ASEAN markets via Burma's Sittwe Port and includes a USD 103 million dollar GOI investment to upgrade the port. MEA's Burma desk Director Suchitra Durai voiced surprise at the report, noting that there are some outstanding points in the deal that require further negotiations. In addition, the final proposal still requires GOI Cabinet approval before it can be signed. Therefore, she was skeptical about an early January time line for completion of the deal.

Indian Foreign Secretary in Beijing for 3rd Round of Strategic Dialogue

¶10. (SBU) Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Skankar Menon will visit Beijing this week for a third round of the India-China

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Strategic Dialogue. According to press reports, items on the agenda include joint cooperation in the area of energy, exploring the notion of a trilateral India-Russia-China business partnership, and greenhouse gas emission reductions in the aftermath of the Bali Summit. Although the border question will be discussed, media sources do not expect any progress on the issue. The Indian media claims that China will press India for clarification of its Dalai Lama/Tibet policy in light of recent statements by the Dalai Lama refuting recent legislation out of Beijing's asserting the government's right to control the succession of lamas through reincarnation or by other means. This follows today's reports that the Dalai Lama has accused Beijing of "cultural genocide."

China Bashing by George Fernandes

¶11. (SBU) Former Defense Minister and National Democratic Alliance (NDA) convener George Fernandes accused the UPA government of continuing to ignore external and internal threats from China. These allegations came in the wake of a flurry of new stories recently about Chinese military activity on its borders with India and Bhutan. They also come days ahead of joint India-China military exercises. Fernandes has for long been hawkish on China and emphasized it as an external threat. He used the Chinese threat in 1998 to justify India's nuclear tests. His charge that the Naxalites in India are "funded by China" appears to be new. Fernandes told news media on December 17: "Today the country is facing dangers from both outside and within. The borders have been compromised. China has started to flex its muscle again and is using the Naxalites to its own political advantage. In spite of all of this, the UPA government has chosen to look the other way as if everything is fine and dandy." The Naxalites/Maoists in India are loosely connect radical, revolutionary communist groups operating in the poorest Indian states.

Not So Fast Stalin!

¶12. (SBU) Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK party held a long planned massive youth rally over the December 14 weekend in the small town of Tirunelveli. The lead-up to the rally, which was organized by Chief Minister Karunanidhi's son, DMK Minister for Local Administration MK Stalin, was marked by speculation that the event would be a "coronation" of some sort -- including speculation that Stalin would be named Deputy Chief Minister or perhaps even replace his father as Chief Minister. However, the two-day rally ended with no such coronation.

¶13. (SBU) The DMK spared no expense staging its elaborate first-ever "DMK Youth Wing" conference. According to media reports, a massive 950 foot by 450 foot dais was built for the occasion, including four separate air-conditioned rooms built to accommodate up to seventy VIP guests. Thousands of young, mostly male DMK supporters were bussed into the small town of Tirunelveli from all over the state. Estimates of the crowd size ranged from 100,000 to 500,000. Karunanidhi and Stalin figured prominently. The son starred on Saturday by leading the assembled cadres on a march to the rally grounds and on Sunday by giving the "presidential address." The father inspected Saturday's march from a specially constructed stage and gave the final address on Sunday. Another highlight of Saturday's proceedings was a two and a half hour sound and light show depicting scenes from the life of the octogenarian Karunanidhi. Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology A. Raja also figured prominently in the weekend's festivities.

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¶14. (SBU) Comment: Rumors that the rally would mark Stalin's coronation as the new DMK leader turned out to be wrong, although Karunanidhi did tell the assembled DMK youth that "your expectations will soon come true. We will announce shortly when this will happen." It is unclear why the DMK held the two-day youth extravaganza. The DMK came under heavy criticism from the opposition and media for the profligate spending required to stage the event. Without the expected elevation of Stalin to a higher profile leadership position, there seemed to be much ado about nothing. At the end, it seemed mostly an excuse to throw a big party and work up enthusiasm for the DMK among the state's young people. Karunanidhi did hint at one other motivation when he urged the assembled youth to go home to their communities and advocate for the controversial Sethusamudram project, which has been delayed due to misgivings among Hindu groups that the dredging will destroy a bridge built by an army of monkeys for the Hindu god Ram (reftel).

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